

IN THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. (currently amended) A smart audio guide system for use in conjunction with an interactive content distribution system that includes a distribution head-end that makes programming available for viewing on a video display device at a viewer subsystem, the viewer subsystem including an audio unit to provide audio for the video display unit, the smart audio guide system comprising:

a recommendation engine for providing a customized viewing-recommendations list for the viewer subsystem based upon the programming available from the interactive content distribution system and a customized viewing profile developed for the viewer subsystem;

a processing unit configured and operative to implement the smart audio guide system functions;

a smart audio guide audio package that includes at least a plurality of smart audio guide audio clips corresponding to the customized viewing-recommendations list; and

a smart guide actuator that is configured and operative in response to one or more predetermined conditions to activate the processing unit;

wherein the plurality of smart audio guide audio clips are generated by a head-end of the interactive content distribution system and stored in a database at the head-end, and said processing unit is configured and operative to cause the plurality of smart audio guide audio clips to be uttered in a predetermined mode at the viewer subsystem via the audio unit when activated to identify programs recommended for viewing at the viewer subsystem based upon the customized viewing-recommendations list.

2. (original) The smart audio guide system of claim 1 wherein the predetermined mode is one wherein the plurality of smart audio guide audio clips are

uttered without a corresponding visual presentation of the customized viewing-recommendations list for the viewer subsystem.

3. (original) The smart audio guide system of claim 1 wherein the predetermined mode is one wherein the plurality of smart audio guide audio clips are uttered in synchronization with a corresponding visual presentation of the customized viewing-recommendations list for the viewer subsystem.

4. (original) The smart audio guide system of claim 3 wherein the corresponding visual presentation is a graphical recommendation menu, and wherein the processing unit is configured and operative to implement a focus frame that visually focuses a corresponding program grid of the graphical recommendation menu in synchronization with the utterance of each of the plurality of smart audio guide audio clips.

5. (original) The smart audio guide system of claim 3 wherein corresponding visual presentation is an electronic program guide and wherein the processing unit is configured and operative to implement a focus frame that visually focuses a corresponding program grid of the electronic program guide in synchronization with the utterance of each of the plurality of smart audio guide audio clips.

6. (original) The smart audio guide system of claim 1 further comprising a speech generating unit, and wherein the smart audio guide audio package further comprises a plurality of smart audio guide text files;

and wherein the processing unit is configured and operative to implement the speech generating unit to convert the plurality of smart audio guide text files into the plurality of smart audio guide audio clips.

7. (original) The smart audio guide system of claim 1 wherein the viewer subsystem further includes a viewer control unit and wherein the smart audio guide actuator comprises a button on the viewer control unit, which when depressed, activates

the processing unit to cause the plurality of smart audio guide audio clips to be uttered in the predetermined mode at the viewer subsystem via the audio unit.

8. (original) The smart audio guide system of claim 1 wherein the smart audio guide actuator comprises a set of instructions that activates the processing unit to cause the plurality of smart audio guide audio clips to be uttered in the predetermined mode at the viewer subsystem via the audio unit when the video display device at the viewer subsystem is initially activated.

9. (original) The smart audio guide system of claim 1 wherein the smart audio guide actuator comprises a set of instructions that activates the processing unit to cause the plurality of smart audio guide audio clips to be uttered in the predetermined mode at the viewer subsystem via the audio unit at the conclusion of a programming period.

10. (original) The smart audio guide system of claim 1 wherein the smart audio guide actuator comprises a set of instructions that activates the processing unit to cause the plurality of smart audio guide audio clips to be uttered in the predetermined mode at the viewer subsystem via the audio unit upon activation of a graphical recommendation menu on the video display device at the viewer subsystem.

11. (original) The smart audio guide system of claim 1 wherein the smart audio guide actuator comprises a set of instructions that activates the processing unit to cause the plurality of smart audio guide audio clips to be uttered in the predetermined mode at the viewer subsystem via the audio unit upon activation of an electronic program guide on the video display device at the viewer subsystem.

12. (original) The smart audio guide system of claim 1 wherein the processing unit is configured and operative to temporarily discontinue the audio associated with programming being displayed via the video display device at the viewer subsystem when

the plurality of smart audio guide audio clips are being uttered in a predetermined mode at the viewer subsystem via the audio unit.

13. (original) The smart audio guide system of claim 1 wherein each of the plurality of smart audio guide audio clips has an audio format that includes a first portion identifying a program name and a second portion identifying a viewing channel.

14. (original) The smart audio guide system of claim 13 wherein each of the plurality of smart audio guide audio clips has a supplemented audio format wherein the first portion and the second portion are supplemented by additional audio information such that each of the plurality of smart audio guide audio clips has a sentence format.

15. (original) The smart audio guide system of claim 1 further comprising:
means for selecting a program for viewing from the customized viewing-recommendations list corresponding to one of the uttered smart audio guide audio clips.

16. (original) The smart audio guide system of claim 15 wherein the viewer subsystem includes a viewer control unit having a plurality of numbers for selecting viewing channels and wherein the selecting means comprises the plurality of numbers of the viewer control unit, and wherein selected ones of the plurality of numbers corresponding to the viewing channel of the one uttered smart audio guide audio clip are sequentially depressed to select the program for viewing corresponding to the one uttered smart audio guide audio clip.

17. (original) The smart audio guide system of claim 15 wherein the viewer subsystem includes a viewer control unit having a select button and wherein the selecting means is the select button of the viewer control unit, and wherein the select button is depressed during utterance of the one uttered smart audio guide audio clip to select the program for viewing corresponding to the one uttered smart audio guide audio clip.

18. (original) The smart audio guide system of claim 15 wherein the viewer subsystem includes a viewer control unit having a plurality of numbers and wherein the processing unit is configured and operative to activate individual ones of the plurality of numbers of the viewer control unit to correspond to viewing channels associated with the plurality of smart audio guide audio clips, and wherein the selecting means comprises the individually activated numbers of the viewer control unit, one which is selectively depressed to select a viewing channel corresponding to the program for viewing associated with the one uttered smart audio guide audio clip.